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AUTHOR Case, Elizabeth J.; Bouchard, Donald
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ABSTRACT

Overall effectiveness and impact were evaluated for the Alternative Transportation Program (ATP) of the Albuquerque (New Mexico) Public Schools, funded under Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Two specialists implemented the ATP, which developed and presented curricula and assemblies tailored to handicapped students on bus and pedestrian safety. The program also involved alternative transportation assessments and inservice and technical assistance for transportation providers working with the handicapped. Behavioral intervention strategies were designed and implemented for children with behavioral problems on buses. Data were collected by interviews with special education personnel; review of Transportation Office records; and surveys of 40 principals/assistant principals, 41 special education teachers, 5 special education aides, 7 support personnel, and 109 transportation providers. Major findings were: (1) 3,348 students from 101 schools participated; (2) two-thirds of transportation providers felt better prepared after training; (3) student behavior problems were reduced by almost 68%; (4) 98% of the teachers used the safety curriculum; (6) over 65% of educators and transportation personnel agreed that the program should continue; (7) more inservices were requested; and (8) liaison services were appreciated. Overall, the program's impact was decidedly positive. (SLD)

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1985-86
EVALUATION REPORT

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P.L. 94-142
Alternative Transportation Program

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725 University, S.E.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87106

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Patrick McDaniel, Assistant Director
for Planning and Research

Prepared by:

Elizabeth J. Case, Ph.D.
Program Evaluation Specialist and Project Manager

with the assistance of
Donald Bouchard, Ph.D.

August 1986

EVALUATION REPORT

P.L. 94-142
ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

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EVALUATION REPORT

P.L. 94-142
ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

Program Description

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) elected to use some of its Public Law 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act-Part B (P.L. 94-142) monies to develop and implement the Alternative Transportation Program during the 1985-86 school year. The services of the program included:

1. The design and presentation of safety curricula and assemblies tailored to handicapped students on topics such as safe bus ridership and pedestrian skills.

2. The design and presentation of safety inservices, curricula and materials for APS employees who work with handicapped students.

3. The design and implementation of intervention strategies for specific children having behavioral problems on busses. This component includes offering inservices and technical assistance to contractors, bus drivers, and aides as needed.

Two specialists were hired to implement the Alternative Transportation Program for 101 APS schools which have students who need special (alternative) transportation (e.g., taxi or special busses). During 1985-86, in the first year of operation, the staff's activities were focused on curricula development and safety presentations. Other activities included providing behavior intervention strategies, alternative transportation assessments, inservices for transportation providers, and technical assistance to transportation providers.

Methodology

The study was designed to evaluate the program in terms of impact on students, teachers, and transportation providers. The study also looked at the overall effectiveness of the program. Data were collected by three methods: interviews, review of records, and survey research.

Major Findings

The major findings of the study included the following:

1. Students in 101 different schools benefitted from the activities of the two P.L. 94-142 Transportation Specialists. Program activities were determined to directly impact 3,348 regular and special education children.

2. Two-thirds of the transportation providers stated that they felt better equipped to handle bus problems as a result of the programs developed by the specialists. Further, intervention and behavior management systems introduced by the specialists were credited with reducing student behavior problems by 67.9% of the transportation providers responding to the survey.

3. The program, "Safety Man/Safety Woman," was incorporated into their classroom curriculum by 98% of the teachers surveyed. Evaluations conducted by the Transportation Specialists found the program to be effective and well-received.

4. Transportation providers indicated that, in their view, the most beneficial activities the Transportation Specialists provided were inservices, intervention, and liaison services. Respondents indicated that the liaison function--facilitating communication and interaction among parents, bus drivers and school staff--was well-received and had a positive impact on staff.

5. More than 69% of both educators and transportation providers either agreed or strongly agreed that the program should continue to be funded by P.L. 94-142 monies.

6. Respondents were asked to "list any suggestions you have to make the program stronger/more effective." Responses included:
   a) A request was made by educators and transportation providers for more inservices on topics such as safety, behavior management, and APS Policy and Procedures Manual.
   b) Several administrators perceived a need for the specialists to concentrate on getting appropriate students on regular busses or public transportation rather than special busses.
   c) A request was made for inservices on how to facilitate more interaction between bus and school personnel as well as among transportation providers, school staff and family members.

EVALUATION REPORT

P.L. 94-142
ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

Program Description

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) made use of some of its Public Law 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act-Part B (P.L. 94-142) funds to develop and implement the P.L. 94-142 Alternative Transportation Program during the 1985-86 school year. The services of the program included:

1. The design and presentation of safety curricula and assemblies tailored to handicapped students on topics such as safe bus ridership and pedestrian skills.

2. The design and presentation of safety inservices, curricula and materials for APS employees who work with handicapped students.

3. The design and implementation of intervention strategies for specific children having behavioral problems on busses. This component includes offering inservices and technical assistance to contractors, bus drivers, and aides as needed.

Two specialists were hired to implement the Alternative Transportation Program for 101 APS schools which have students who need special (alternative) transportation (e.g., taxi or special busses). During the 1985-86 school year, the activities of the specialists included the following:

1. Developing safety curricula appropriate for use with handicapped students in special education classrooms.

2. Conducting safety presentations for regular and special education students.

3. Conducting inservices for bus drivers and bus aides on the special needs of handicapped students.

4. Developing behavior intervention strategies for individual students exhibiting behavioral problems on busses.

5. Reviewing files of individual students to transfer students to "regular" transportation as appropriate.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Development Of The Study

In January of 1986, Central Office Special Education Department administrators met with representatives from the Planning, Research and Accountability Department (PRA) to prioritize for study the 35 P.L. 94-142 components. The Alternative Transportation Program was considered to be a priority for evaluation by the Special Education Department. Hence, it was studied at the end of the 1985-86 school year.

The evaluator from PRA was assigned to study the impact and effectiveness of the program. Beginning in April, 1986, the evaluator interviewed key special education administrators to ascertain: a) the goals of the program, b) the activities of the program staff, c) their perceptions of the program, and d) questions that the administrators wanted to have answered.

Research questions to be addressed and methods for data collection were determined. Questions to be addressed were:

1. What were the activities of the transportation staff?
2. What was the impact of the program on children?
3. What was the impact of the program on educators?
4. What impact did the program have on transportation providers?
5. Should the program continue?
6. What could be done to make the program stronger?

Data collection was accomplished through interviews, review of records, and survey research. Each of these methods is briefly described.

Interviews. Group and individual interviews of special education teachers, special education administrators, principals, and transportation staff were conducted prior to administering the survey and, in some instances, after the survey. Pre-survey interviews were conducted to obtain background information on the services provided by the transportation staff and to determine if staff had questions they would like to have answered.

All questions were incorporated into the study. Post-survey interviews were used to clarify issues raised in comments on the survey.

Review Of Records. Records in the Transportation Office were reviewed as were memos, staff monthly reports and curricular materials. The purpose of the review was to examine the activities of the program staff and the ways in which the program was utilized.

Survey Research. APS educators (principals, assistant principals, special education teachers, aides, and support personnel) as well as transportation providers (contractors, bus drivers, and aides) were surveyed to ascertain perceived impact and effectiveness of the program. Comments were solicited on the benefits of the program and what could be done to make the program stronger.

Of the 285 educators surveyed, 97 or 34% returned usable surveys. Forty (40) or 41.2% of those returning usable surveys were principals or assistant principals; 41 or 42.3% were special education teachers; 5 or 5.2% were special education aides; 7 or 7.2% were support personnel; and 4 or 4.2% did not indicate their position. Of the 240 transportation providers surveyed, 109 or 45% returned usable instruments. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the returned surveys were from bus drivers, 23% were from transportation aides, and 2% were from contractors.

Rather than discuss the results of each data source in isolation, all the information has been integrated according to topics throughout the discussion. The end result is a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness and impact of the program.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Summary Of The Activities Of The Transportation Staff

A review of the records in the Transportation Office, individual interviews, and group interviews revealed a myriad of activities conducted by the Transportation Staff. Table 1 (see page 7) summarizes the activities of the staff, number and level of schools impacted, and number of students impacted. A description of some of the activities follows.

Safety Curricula Development And Safety Presentations. The Transportation Staff developed safety curricula and safety presentations (presentations for assemblies or small groups) appropriate for handicapped students. Topics included safe bus ridership, pedestrian safety skills, and correct emergency evacuation skills. According to the Transportation Office's records, 3098 regular and special education students in 32 different schools were impacted by safety curricula and presentations.

Inservices for Transportation Providers. The staff presented inservices for transportation providers (bus drivers, bus aides, and contractors) on topics such as effective behavior management strategies for dealing with handicapped children, appropriate evacuation procedures for medically fragile or physically impaired, and the special needs of handicapped students.

Behavior Management. The specialists assessed 66 individual students for behavior management intervention as appropriate. The specialists then trained transportation providers on how to implement these interventions.

Technical Assistance. The specialists provided technical assistance to bus drivers and aides and offered extra help to implement behavior management plans. For example, specialists demonstrated a behavior management technique for a particular child as often as necessary for an aide or bus driver to feel comfortable with the intervention technique.

Meetings. The specialists attended a variety of meetings regarding 36 different children. Some meetings were to help all adults involved provide a consistent behavior management system for a child, other meetings were held to help mediate differences of opinion among school staff, transportation providers, and parents.

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES OF
ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM STAFF

Activity	# Of Schools Impacted Directly	# Of Students Impacted Directly	# Of Adults Impacted Directly	Description Of Those Impacted	# Of Schools And Level
1. Safety curricula development & presentations. Includes assemblies on safe bus ridership, pedestrian safety skills, & correct emergency evacuation procedures.	32	3098	---	Regular & Special Education	24 El 7 Mid 1 H.S.
2. Inservices for transportation providers (8 bus companies).	101	----	188	Regular & Special Education	69 El 23 Mid 9 H.S.
3. Behavior management--requires specialist to ride on the bus to determine proper intervention techniques and work with driver to implement them.	66	66	---	Special Education	53 El 12 Mid 1 H.S.
4. Meetings with selected school staff and parents regarding an individual child.	17	36	---	Special Education	20 El 11 Mid 5 H.S.
5. Meetings or technical assistance to bus drivers/aides	56	79	---	Special Education	2 El 18 Mid 1 H.S.
6. Monitor loading zones (safety assessment)	101	--	---	Special Education	69 El 23 Mid 9 H.S.
7. Develop materials for inservices, curricula, and Administrators' Handbook.	101	--	---	Special Education	69 El 23 Mid 9 H.S.
8. Review cases & change to alternate transportation.	56	71	---	Special Education	As Needed

Safety Assessment. The specialists were called upon by school based administrators or transportation providers to assess the safety of bus loading zones in all 101 schools where there was special bussing for special education students. On other occasions, specialists were asked to help select equipment such as safety harnesses for students or wheelchair tie downs for different types of wheelchairs and to insure that the selected equipment would be used appropriately.

Safety Materials Development. The specialists developed safety related materials for inservices and special education curricula. Materials included coloring books, worksheets, and manipulatives.

Case Review. The specialists reviewed 150 different students' individualized educational plans and changed 71 students to alternative transportation (e.g., regular busses or public transportation) as appropriate.

Impact Of The Program

One of the major goals of this study was to evaluate the program in terms of the impact on students, special education staff, and transportation providers (bus drivers, aides, and contractors). Data for this segment of the "Findings and Analysis" section were obtained from interviews, review of records, and survey research. All the information was integrated according to topics throughout the discussion. Each of these areas of impact will be examined separately.

Impact Of The Program On Students. Survey respondents identified three activities which were felt to have had positive impact on students' bus behavior. These were: 1. behavior intervention programs; 2. the safety curricula; and 3. instruction in behavior management systems for transportation providers. Each is discussed separately.

The impact of behavior intervention programs is discussed first. Both educators and transportation providers were asked if the behavior intervention program developed by the Transportation Specialists had improved student bus behavior over last year. A majority (54.8%) of transportation providers said the programs had improved student bus behavior. Among educators, 58.7% felt the programs had improved their students' bus behavior.

Second, educators were favorably impressed by the safety curricula, with 59.4% saying it has had a positive impact on students' bus behavior. This may be because educators had the opportunity to observe this demonstration program in practice and because many teachers (98.0%) also incorporated the program into their own curriculum. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the educators felt the safety presentations had a positive impact on students' bus behavior.

Third, another activity having a positive impact on student bus behavior was instruction in behavior management systems for bus personnel. This program was developed jointly by teachers and the Transportation Specialists. The program was felt to be effective by 54.8% of educators and 63.7% of transportation providers. It was mentioned also by many of the bus personnel as one of the "three most useful things the Transportation Specialists do in working" with transportation providers. Many educators felt that the specific behavior interventions and behavior management training were the most significant activities of the P. L. 94-142 Transportation Services. One teacher summed up the consensus of opinion.

> The intervention and behavior management training by the transportation specialists for specific student problems was very good. They were extremely responsive and cooperative. The most impressive improvement seen was the bus discipline policy they started. Tickets were issued for misbehavior and certain bus privileges were then denied. It's been effective. The Specialists' support and quick feedback helped make the year more productive. A bad bus ride can ruin the student's entire day at school. This system helped prevent this when it was enforced.

Survey respondents indicated that three activities had very positive impact on students' bus behavior. These were:

1. behavior intervention,
2. safety curricula; and
3. teaching transportation providers behavior management systems.

Interview respondents pointed out some additional activities that had a positive impact on students. These included:

> Case review, in which 71 students were transferred from special education bussing to regular bussing. All 71 students successfully made the transition to regular bussing and remained there for the year. This accomplished placing students in the least restrictive environment as required by P.L. 94-142.

Meetings - various types of meetings were held concerning 36 different children. In some instances, specialists mediated differences of opinion among school staff transportation providers and parents. Other meetings were held to help all adults involved with a child provide a consistent behavior management system for a behaviorally disordered child.

In summary, then, the Alternative Transportation Program was perceived as having a positive impact on students.

Impact Of The
Program On Educators

Educators gained from the improved bus behavior of their special education students considering the teacher's observation that "a bad bus ride can ruin the student's entire day at school." If a student arrives at school with a negative attitude due to a problem on the bus, the teacher and program can be impacted negatively for the remainder of the day. According to comments on the survey, other ways the activities of the program benefitted educators were by the specialists':

1. Assuming duties that had been assumed by teachers or administrators in past years (e.g., handling bus problems by setting up behavior management systems for bus personnel to use or, acting as a mediator between bus personnel and home).

2. Helping bus personnel better deal with students and learn to communicate more effectively with families and school staff.

3. Assuring that discussions regarding individual students (in EA&R's and "Ed Team" meetings) took into consideration transportation issues as required by P.L. 94-142.

One safety curriculum presentation, the "Safety Man/Safety Woman" project, had a major impact on teachers. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the teachers responding said they had incorporated this program in their classroom curricula. This benefitted educators by providing curricula which was tailored to the needs of handicapped students.

Impact Of The Program On
Transportation Providers

According to results of the survey, nearly all aspects of the P.L. 94-142 Transportation Program had a positive impact on bus personnel. Two facts stand out. First, 63.7% of the transportation providers felt that there were fewer behavioral problems on busses as a direct result of the specialists' inservice training and intervention programs. Transportation providers commented that they had to deal with fewer behavioral problems than they did in previous years.

Second, 67.9% of the transportation providers thought themselves better equipped to handle behavior problems as a result of the inservice training provided by the Transportation Specialists. The salient point is that the specialists helped transportation providers better deal with behavioral problems on busses. The Transportation Specialists recognized that it is difficult to change the behavior of some special education students, specifically those who are behaviorally disordered. Instead, transportation providers are taught behavior management skills that are appropriate for most students in an effort to help transportation providers confront and alleviate behavioral problems more effectively.

When asked to list the three most useful activities of the Transportation Specialists, the large majority of transportation providers (90%) mentioned inservice training. Bus personnel were especially appreciative of inservices on safety, behavior management, and the special needs of handicapped children.

The second most important service as seen by 74% of the transportation providers was in the area of behavior intervention strategies:

> The specialists would ride the buses and/or take the driver's viewpoint and then make suggestions to solve the specific problems.

One bus driver summed up the consensus of opinion on the benefit of behavior intervention strategies when she said:

> The specialists thoroughly investigate a problem. They will ride the bus and observe the students, the aides, and the drivers. They listen to you, contact parents, and back us up. They give us good support and will follow through even two months after working with us.

Finally, the third most important activity carried out by the Transportation Specialists was in the area of communication. One bus driver summed up the consensus of opinion when she said:

> The specialists provided us a liaison with teachers, school administrators, and parents. The program helped us understand how the "school system works." Also, morale was helped. We felt like we had a voice. People talked with us not to us.

In summary, while it is difficult to change the behavior of a handicapped student, the transportation program can and does help staff better deal with behavioral problems as they arise. Several transportation providers felt that the program helps them confront and alleviate behavior problems more effectively. According to respondents, the specialists also effectively helped drivers and aides deal with individual students as appropriate.

Should The Program Continue?

One survey item asked educators and transportation providers if the program "should continue to be funded by P.L. 94-142 funds?" More than 69% of both educators and transportation providers either agreed or strongly agreed that the program should continue to be funded by P.L. 94-142 monies. More specifically, 69.8% of the educators and 74.0% of the transportation providers favored continuing to fund the program. Several people, 18.9% of the transportation providers and 23.3% of the educators, did not feel that they knew enough about the program to comment. Only a small minority of each group (6%) recommended that the funding for the program be terminated. These respondents noted the desire to use monies allocated for the Alternative Transportation to fund more Field Trips or C-level aides.

What Could Be Done To Make The Program Stronger/More Effective?

Educators and transportation providers were asked, "Do you have any suggestions that would make the P. L. 94-142 Transportation Program stronger/more effective?" Responses to this question are paraphrased and summarized below. The number of people giving similar responses are noted in parentheses after each comment.

Educators' Suggestions (N=82)

--Continue the funding. Bus drivers and aides need more training. They need consistent inservice before the beginning of the year and throughout the year. Inservice training should be in these areas: clarifying discipline policy for drivers and aides; enforcing rules consistently; facilitating more interaction between and among bus personnel, a child's parents, and school staff. (22)

--Continue the funding. The intervention by the Transportation Specialists for specific student problems was very good. Their bus discipline training support and quick feedback were very helpful. (15)

--More inservices needed to explain the activities/programs provided by the specialists. Inservice should include all school personnel (e.g., principals, teachers, and aides). (15)

--Assign aides to all special education busses. If unable to do this, then assign aides to buses transporting students who are behaviorally disordered. (9)

--Establish a thorough plan for addressing alternative transportation. (7)

Transportation Providers' Suggestions (N=53)

--More inservices are needed to make even more drivers and aides aware of the Transportation Program. Inservice training should: give inservice to "big buses" that carry both special and regular students; provide more safety talks to children; train transportation aides especially in behavior management; and update them on rules and regulations. (14)

--Please provide drivers and aides with inservice before the beginning of the year. Tell us about the programs. Make everyone aware of the ways the Transportation Specialists work with us in solving problems that occur during the year. (12)

--Please continue funding because personal contact with the specialists have helped drivers and aides confront problems more effectively. (7)

--Educators need to take the initiative in dealing with parents or acting as mediators. Bus drivers and aides are not trained to deal with problems specific to disabled children without the help of school personnel. (7)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The P. L. 94-142 Alternative Transportation Program was evaluated in late spring of 1986. The program had been in place for less than one year at the time of the study. The two Transportation Specialists who were responsible for developing and implementing the program began work the first week of August, 1985.

The study was designed to: (1) summarize the activities of the program and (2) evaluate the program in terms of impact on children, staff, and transportation providers. Data collection took three forms: interviews, review of records, and survey research.

The major findings included the following:

1. During 1985-86, the first year of operation, the program's activities were focused on curricula development and safety presentations. Other activities included providing: behavior management intervention, alternative transportation assessment, inservice to transportation providers, and technical assistance to transportation providers. Respondents indicated that all activities were thought to have had positive impact on students, staff, and transportation providers.

2. Students in 101 different schools in APS benefitted from the activities of the two P.L. 94-142 Transportation Specialists. Their activities were determined to directly impact 3348 regular and special education children.

3. Two-thirds of the transportation providers stated that they felt better equipped to handle bus problems as a result of the programs developed by the specialists. Further, intervention and behavior management systems introduced by the specialists were credited with reducing student behavior problems by 67.9% the transportation providers.

4. The curricular program, "Safety Man/Safety Woman," was incorporated into the classroom curriculum by 98% of teachers surveyed.

5. Transportation providers indicated that, in their view, the three most beneficial services the Transportation Specialists provided were inservices, intervention, and liaison services.

6. The liaison function of the Transportation staff has been well-received by transportation providers and educators. The liaison function--facilitating communication and interaction--was felt to have had a positive impact on staff as well as students.

7. More than 69% of both groups either agreed or strongly agreed that the program should continue to be funded by P.L. 94-142 funds.

8. Respondents were asked to "list any suggestions you have that will make the program stronger." Responses included:

   a) Transportation providers requested inservices on the following topics:
      1) Behavior management;
      2) Handicapping conditions of students:
      3) APS policy and regulations;
      4) Services provided by the program; and
      5) Transportation regulations.

   b) Educators requested inservices on:
      1) Services provided by the program;
      2) How to facilitate more interaction between bus and school personnel; and
      3) Train bus personnel on how the "school system works" (e.g., discipline policy and the need for consistency in enforcing rules).

   c) Several administrators perceived a need for the specialists to concentrate on transferring appropriate students to regular busses or public transportation rather than transporting them on special busses.

Current APS policy insures that staff, including the project leader, will review the data and findings contained in this report. A plan which includes appropriate steps to address identified program needs will be implemented.